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LABOUR ORGANISER

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THE LABOUR PARTY INVITES APPLICATIONS FOR THE POST OF ASSISTANT REGIONAL ORGANISER IN LANCASHIRE AND CHESHIRE. Forms of application and particulars of appointment may be obtained from Mr. A. L. Williams, National Agent, The Labour Party, Transport House, Smith Square, London, S.W.1, to whom they should be returned not later than 30th December, 1958.

THE LABOUR PARTY REQUIRES AN ORGANISING ASSISTANT FOR THE GLASGOW AREA. Application forms and conditions of appointment are obtainable from the National Agent, The Labour Party, Transport House, Smith Square, London, S.W.1. Application forms must be returned to the National Agent not later than 31st December, 1958.

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THE LABOUR ORGANISER

EDITOR: A. L. WILLIAMS

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DECEMBER 1958

PRICE FIVEPENCE

Creating a Myth

HOW the myth that the Tories are gaining increasing support is built up was illustrated by the way in which the Press dealt with the results of the Pontypool and the East Aberdeenshire by-elections. Even such a reputable paper as *The Times* headed its news story about Pontypool, 'Labour Majority Reduced', and its news story on the East Aberdeenshire by-election carried the heading, 'Conservative In At E. Aberdeen. Majority of 6,328 over Labour'.

Yet at East Aberdeenshire, in what was a Tory stronghold, 825 more electors voted against the Government than voted for its candidate, while at Pontypool, Labour had a majority of 10,800 over both the Tory and the Welsh Nationalist, and at Pontypool the Labour share of the votes cast was reduced by only 4.4 per cent and the Tory share by 5.6 per cent, and at East Aberdeenshire the Tory share was reduced by 19.9 per cent and the Labour share by only 4.4 per cent. In both constituencies, there had been a straight fight at the General Election and a three-cornered fight at the by-elections.

Of course, the share of the votes cast for the candidates was given in the news stories, but even so, the headings are misleading as were most of the comments of the political writers in the Tory newspapers.

At Chichester there was a swing against Labour of 0.1 per cent, which

is negligible as it represented only 33 votes. At Morecambe and Lonsdale the swing against the Tories was 5.9 per cent, which represented a swing to Labour of the same percentage.

Instead of showing rising support for the Tories, the four recent by-elections indicate that there is no substantial change in the electoral position.

If the by-elections have shown that the rising tide of Toryism is only a myth, also they have not shown a substantial swing to Labour, but this does not mean that Labour could not win the next General Election even if there was no improvement in the political climate meanwhile.

There are 20 seats held by Labour with less than 1,000 votes, and 53 seats held by our opponents with less than 3,000 votes. Adequate electoral records, a good registration of Labour supporters for the postal vote and efficient electoral organisation can win those Tory seats, and hold those Labour seats, by getting Labour supporters to vote.

The 'Into Action' campaign should not only be concerned with creating interest and arousing enthusiasm among known supporters, but should attempt to win over new voters, of whom there will be many hundreds in each constituency, and people who are uncommitted to either of the major parties.

The Gallup polls and the votes given to Liberal candidates in the by-elections show that there are a substantial number of electors who have not yet made up their minds, and if we can convince sufficient of these, other seats besides the highly marginal could fall to Labour, and give a Labour Government a substantial majority to carry through its programme.

Plea for Pooled Advertising

THE Conservative Party campaign in the weekly Press is a pointer in the right direction and would be even more successful if it wasn't in effect preaching to the converted. The cost of these insertions is staggering when viewed on a national scale, and even more so when judged against the individual constituencies' budget for propaganda. A solution suggests itself to me which has most likely occurred to many.

Each rural area is served by a weekly paper, which in the majority of cases is part of series. The cost of advertising in the complete series is naturally dearer than in the individual papers, but works out much cheaper per copy. A fact that is sometimes overlooked is the vast number of constituencies covered by one such series.

The two areas with which I have been connected are covered as follows: Bath, North Somerset, West Wilts, Wells (Som.) all come under the 'Mendip Press' series.

Lowestoft, Yarmouth, North Norfolk, South Norfolk, Central Norfolk, South-West Norfolk and the Norwich constituencies come under the 'Norwich Mercury' series.

You will admit that to spread the cost of a really worthwhile advert over such a group of constituencies brings Press advertising within the reach of practically all constituencies.

I therefore suggest that regional Press committees be formed embracing the areas covered by a local weekly newspaper group, with the aim of promoting worthwhile Press advertising at a low cost.

A necessary member on this committee is someone versed in practical typography—perhaps even a party member employed on the particular paper who would know exactly what range of type is held.

J. MITCHARD

The Labour Party Press Department does supply each month copy and, if necessary, stereos, for advertisements to be inserted in local newspapers. This service is used by an increasing number of Constituency Labour Parties and one or two group schemes are operating.

Regional Councils might take the

initiative in securing the co-operation of Constituency Labour Parties in a group scheme for each of the series of local newspapers published in their regions.—EDITOR.

Horror Films

IT'S getting worse than horror films!

It's bad enough when the *Daily Herald*, the paper that cares, paints a soul-chilling picture of the 'grave new world' in which the success of post-1964 elections is apparently going to rest largely on our skill at bouncing subliminal 'winking' messages off the bald pates of platform speakers and adding a quick dash of thought drug to the workers' beer.

But when I seek solace in the comforting, familiar pages of the *Labour Organiser*, what do I find? Frank Shepherd in communion with a 'thing from Warlingham' (of all places) which seems to do everything in the committee rooms, except brew the tea and hold the candidate's hand. Thank goodness Dick Knowles chose the same edition to expound the virtues of the good old 'Sevenoaks System', which remains unaffected by the wonders of the modern world.

How should agents react to all these technological and psychological developments? Well, as one who has yet to see his twenty-fifth birthday, I have an uneasy feeling that my superannuation benefits are fast receding. At this rate, by 1964 organisers will have been replaced by some sort of cross between Frankenstein and Orwell's Thought Police. Perhaps we shall yet see the day when hopeful candidates for the Grade A Certificate have to satisfy the examiners on their knowledge of electronics, remote control and subliminal impulses.

Looking back on some of the committee rooms I have seen (not in my present constituency, I hasten to add) and remembering the astonishing tricks I have seen performed with pre-nuclear methods like the 'Stym' system, I dread to think what some of our committee room workers would achieve with the 'Thing from

Warlingham'. It would probably end up tuned in to the 'Army Game' or picking Ernie's premium bonds.

Only one thing consoles me. Judging from their membership of twelve, our comrade Boffins from Warlingham have not yet succeeded in developing an electronic robot membership canvasser. But for how long, O Lord, how long ... ?

J. CARTWRIGHT

Unfair Voting System

PRETTY well every time a General Election comes round we hear appeals for a change in the voting system. Apparently, the one-man one-vote simple-majority system is too straightforward; we need something more complicated if democracy is to flourish.

Well, they've had a General Election in Southern Rhodesia, and just before the election they changed from the simple majority to the transferable vote. The results are worth looking at.

There were 55,148 people on the electoral roll and 39,712 votes were cast. There were contests in thirty seats.

There were three parties: the Federal Party, the Rhodesia Party and the Dominion Party. It was believed that supporters of the liberal-minded Rhodesia Party would give their second preference vote to the government party, the middle of the road Federals, and so keep out the right wing Dominion Party.

On the first count the votes were split up in this way:

Dominion Party	...	18,142
Federal Party	...	16,840
Rhodesia Party	...	4,663
Independents	...	67

In ten constituencies candidates did not receive an absolute majority of votes cast. In these then the third candidate was eliminated and the second preference votes on the ballot papers distributed.

As expected, most of the second preference votes went to the Federals, and finally they won three seats which they would have lost if the simple majority system had operated. These three seats enabled the Federals to win the election. They have 17 seats against the Dominions' 13.

But in both the first and second counts the Dominions had polled most votes.

The conclusion to be drawn is that the preferential voting system complicated matters, and then produced a result which is not manifestly more just than the simple majority system.

FRANK BARBER

CANDIDATES

THE following were endorsed as prospective Parliamentary candidates by the National Executive Committee recently:

Torrington	...	Mr. R. F. H. Dobson
Portsmouth,		
Langstone	...	Mr. D. G. Reynolds
Leicester South East	...	Mr. D. J. Williams
Ealing South	...	Mr. H. G. Garside
Weston-super-Mare	...	Mr. S. E. Hampton
Pontypool	...	Mr. L. Abse
East Aberdaenshire	...	Mr. J. B. Urquhart

★

WITHDRAWAL OF CANDIDATURE

Portsmouth South...	Miss D. D. Forster
Merton & Morden	Mr. J. Strudwick
Epsom	Mr. A. Howard

National Staff Changes

MR. J. W. RAISIN, Regional Organiser, and Mr. J. H. Hill, Assistant Regional Organiser, who are now working in London and Middlesex, are to be transferred to the new organising area comprising the counties of Bedfordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Hertfordshire, Middlesex and Oxfordshire.

The vacancy for a Regional Organiser in the County of London organising area has been filled by the appointment of Mr. L. G. Sims, who has been Registrar of Study Courses in the National Agent's Department for seven years.

It is to be hoped that the Organisers will take up their new duties next month.

DEALING WITH THE OVERSPILL

by Sheila Latimer

YOU will be aware that many constituency parties are experiencing problems with the electorate of new housing estates, which either accommodate tenants from different parts of the constituency, or the overspills from the cities.

Political apathy appears to be the greatest enemy. Often tenants who have been active members of the Labour Party in the localities from which they have been removed, are reluctant to take up their activities in the new locality.

This is a problem which, I am sure you will agree, cannot be ignored or neglected, for we have much valuable support in these estates. Often the tenants have moved from congested communities where, despite the housing conditions, there has been good neighbourliness. They were part of a community with a history.

★

A new housing estate is by no means always tenanted by people from the same localities, and the problem becomes intensified when tenants have been moved out of their old surroundings and taken to live on a new estate in a strange town, which very often is situated on its perimeter.

They feel uprooted and isolated, and often reluctant to begin associating immediately with new organisations. On top of this there is so much for the women to do in their new homes, equally as much for the menfolk in the garden, and very often longer bus journeys, which means a short evening.

There is another aspect of the problem. The feelings of the new tenant are not always appreciated by the old inhabitants, and it is easy for barriers to be erected which neither help to weld the new community with the old, nor can they easily be pulled down.

In view of the situation which appears to exist in a number of localities, I thought you might be interested to learn about an experiment which is being tried out in a West Midlands marginal constituency. On its perimeter there is a housing estate which is accommodating overspill from a city in the vicinity.

One of the Labour representatives from the ward in which the housing estate is

situated has shown great enterprise. With the consent of his ward the representative has sent out a leaflet to all tenants in the form of an invitation to seek his help.

He begins by asking the residents the following questions:

Do you know your local representative of the council?

Do you know your candidates for the forthcoming elections?

Do you know of the various activities on the estate?

Do you know your neighbours?

If you do not know would you like to know?

He goes on to point out that many people would like to ask questions of their local representatives, but for various reasons cannot do so at public meetings. He then points out that the councillors are very anxious to try and answer any questions which may be worrying electors, however small they may seem to be, but that it is impossible, owing to the time factor, to visit all tenants individually. He suggests that in order to overcome the difficulty, a tenant interested in particular local government problems should invite to his or her home a small group of neighbours who are interested in the same questions.

Having done so, an invitation should then be sent to him to arrange for a Labour representative who is most fitted to deal with the subjects the group wishes to discuss, to meet this group.

★

The enterprising councillor states that he has already visited the homes of several interested parties when a number of topics were discussed and various criticisms aired. Here is a list of some of the things that were talked about: Education in the area; how the local council works; the two-tier system of government; Income Tax, and the various claims you can make if buying your own home; provision of shops; police supervision; roads and lighting; health services, bus services; what is planned for the estate and where.

Here is an example of where, if Mohammed will not go to the mountain, the mountain must go to Mohammed.

Look Ahead for Victory

Round up of the jobs you can do now to bring
in the votes on election day.

1—FIND THESE ELECTORS

IT is likely that the Tory Bill to remove the restriction on the use of cars to take voters to the poll will become law by the end of this year. The Government's determination to rush this Bill on to the Statute Book is a clear indication that the Tories do not believe what the writers in the Tory newspapers have been saying about the certainty of the defeat of Labour in the General Election.

Their desperation to hang on to power, which has compelled them to alter the rules immediately before the contest, is likely to cause them to get up to other tricks to give them even the slightest advantage over their opponents.

In four by-elections where the Tories determined the date, polling day was fixed on the 14th February—the last day before a new Register was published. Obviously, they thought that they had the edge on the Labour Party in dealing with an old Register, with its large number of removals, because of their better electoral records and their exploitation of postal vote facilities.

POLL IN FEBRUARY?

If they are prepared to go to these lengths in by-elections, it is not beyond possibility that they will do the same in the General Election and, despite Mr. Macmillan's assurances about no election this winter, it will take place in February, 1959. In the face of such a possibility, Constituency Labour Parties must be prepared by having

their own complete and up to date records and a satisfactory registration of Labour supporters for the postal vote.

It is true that the restriction on cars was introduced by the Labour Government in 1948 and was opposed by the Tory Opposition. Originally, the proposal had been made in the Speaker's Conference on Electoral Reform in 1944 and had been rejected by only one vote. It was re-introduced during the committee stage of the Representation of the People Act, 1948, but when the consolidating Act was introduced the following year, the restriction on cars was not opposed.

'NO' TO TORIES

At the Tory Conference in 1955, there was a resolution urging the repeal of a section of the 1949 Act dealing with the restriction on cars, but the then Home Secretary, Gwilym Lloyd George, said:

"It is—and I cannot emphasise this too strongly—of the greatest consequence to us as a country to ensure the continuance of general confidence and a respect for election law as something that is above party. Therefore, it should be kept as far as possible out of the party arena, and this may sometimes mean leaning towards something which is a little irksome and irritating because I can conceive of nothing worse for this country than to have a Government having its own ideas about electoral reform and having those ideas completely altered by the Government that comes into office after. I can think of nothing more disastrous to democracy than that."

He pointed out that in 1950, the first General Election after the limitation was imposed, there was a poll of over

84 per cent, a higher poll in any General Election since 1929.

The Labour Government, in limiting the number of cars that candidates could use to take people to vote, was concerned that the ability to vote was in no way impaired. It introduced facilities for voting by post and simplified the procedure for securing more polling stations. We can expect that when the Labour Party handles the postal vote as efficiently as it should, the Tories will clamour for the abolition of the postal vote!

The stark truth is that Labour has failed lamentably in the past three General Elections to get anything like

the postal votes went to the Tory, and consequently it can be claimed that the Tories won the seat because of our neglect of the postal vote facilities provided by a Labour Government.

There are 16 constituencies held by Labour with majorities of less than 1,000 where there was a substantial postal vote in 1955, and which will remain vulnerable unless the constituency parties concerned do something about the postal vote.

And that something should be done now! The last day for a postal vote application to be considered is 12 days before polling day in a Parliamentary election, and before then not many electors will be aware that an election is on, but Party workers will then be under great pressure preparing the election campaign and unable to give concentrated attention to registering people for a postal vote.

Tory Postal Votes Won These Seats

	Maj.	P.V.
Battersea Sth. ...	679	1,319
Wandsworth Cent. ...	1,093	1,380
Bradford Nth. ...	69	725
Carlisle ...	370	918
Ealing Nth. ...	246	930
Hull Nth. ...	590	768
Oldham East ...	380	429
Devonport ...	100	1,149
Preston Sth. ...	474	648
York ...	1,104	1,752
Buckingham ...	1,140	1,545
Maldon ...	550	2,096
Eastleigh ...	545	1,011
Hitchin ...	965	1,599
Norfolk Sth. ...	1,475	1,870
Yarmouth ...	917	1,143
The Wrekin ...	478	1,457
Eye ...	889	1,945
Craighton ...	210	446
Central Ayr ...	167	903
Lanark ...	958	1,391

ELECTORS WHO MOVE

There are electors who can be registered only when an election is imminent because their incapacity to vote in person is only temporary, but there are many who are permanently incapacitated, or whose job makes it possible that they will not be able to go to the polling booth; and, of course, there are many who have removed outside the local government area in which they are registered.

If the General Election comes before the publication of the new Register, these removals will be very heavy, but even if the election is fought on a new Register, there still will be people who have removed since the qualifying date, which was 10th October, 1958.

The appointment of suitable party members in every ward to collect information about those who, it is thought, may be qualified for a postal vote, and the appointment of a constituency officer to collate all this information and to follow it up to the point of registration, should be tackled at once.

Once there are people whose job it

(Continued on page 232)

the proper number of its supporters registered for a postal vote. At the last General Election, there were 21 seats won by Conservatives where the postal vote was in excess of the Tory majority, and in most cases greatly in excess.

It is a pretty safe assumption that in nearly every one of these the bulk of

2—More Polling Stations

THERE is little doubt that the Conservative Party will benefit considerably from the repeal of Section 88 of the Representation of the People Act, 1949, as they will be able to employ far more cars than we are able to do—and for far longer periods on polling day.

As we cannot compete with Tories in the field of conveying electors to the poll, we must see how best we can counter the effect. This can be done in a number of ways. If we do our job thoroughly by finding our Labour vote and getting them sufficiently interested, they will turn out, car or no car. Also, even greater attention will have to be paid to the postal vote—especially for removals.

One of the most effective ways in which we can take action is to see that our supporters are not placed at a disadvantage on polling day. This can be done by ensuring that polling facilities are provided where they are most needed. Now is the time to do it, as the Register of Electors is in process of being compiled.

TAKE A SURVEY

A thorough review of polling stations throughout the constituency should be undertaken immediately and relate the position of the real need of the electors. Where it is found that the existing polling station is inadequate, then representations should be made to the appropriate Electoral Registration Officer.

The main requirements of a polling station are accessibility, sufficient space for the Presiding Officer and his staff, and also for the positioning of voting compartments to ensure strict privacy. Where possible, polling stations should be on ground level.

The problem of adequate polling stations has become acute over the

past years, owing to the development of housing estates and the failure to provide other amenities. Unfortunately, in some areas, the position is now being aggravated by slum clearance, and unless we are careful even more inaccessible polling stations might be designated.

NO SUITABLE BUILDING

The stock answer of many Electoral Registration Officers who have been approached regarding polling facilities has been that no suitable building exists in the locality and therefore nothing can be done.

The question of portable or temporary polling stations should therefore be considered. This is a matter which should receive far more attention than it does. In most housing estates there are open spaces where a temporary polling station could be erected. A number of enterprising local authorities have erected marquees, and these can be hired at a reasonable fee.

An even better idea was tried out in the Norwood area in the L.C.C. elections last April. In place of the usual Church Hall, the polling station was an inflatable rubber hut. This hut, when packed, measured 4 ft. 6 ins. × 18 ins. × 18 ins., but inflated to a size of 30 ft. × 19 ft. × 9 ft. high.

The time taken to erect this hut was less than five minutes by using a small electric blower connected to a car battery. The lighting of the hut was supplied by a nearby lamp standard. A reasonably flat surface is all that is required.

I understand that many Civil Defence units have these inflatable huts, and others can be hired at a reasonable cost. Some of these huts were used to house Hungarian refugees and proved

to be quite adequate. Why should not these be used?

Messrs. Booth & Co. Ltd., of St. James's Street, London, S.W.1, have also produced a portable polling booth and have taken advertisement space in local government journals. With all these facilities available there is now no reason to make electors walk long distances to vote.

When formulating our plans for more adequate polling stations these suggestions should be taken into account. We should press that decisions be made on the need of the electors and not on the cost that may be involved. In fact, Section 11 of the Representation of the People Act says:

- (1) Every constituency shall be divided into polling districts and, subject to the provisions of this section, there shall be a polling place designated for each polling district.
- (2) It shall be the duty, in England and Wales, of the local authority whose clerk is registration officer and, in Scotland of the returning officer to make the division into polling districts and to designate the polling places, and to keep the polling districts and polling places under review, in accordance with the following rules, that is to say:
 - (a) The local authority or returning officer shall exercise the powers conferred by this section with a view to giving all electors in the constituency such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances.

Should the efforts made locally fail to have the required effect, then advantage can be taken of another provision in Section 11, which says:

- (4) If any interested authority or not less than thirty electors in a constituency make a representation to the Secretary of State that the powers conferred by this section have not been exercised so as to meet the reasonable requirements of the electors in the constituency or any body of those electors, the Secretary of State shall consider

the representation and may, if he thinks fit:

- (a) direct the local authority, or, in Scotland, returning officer by whom the powers are exercisable to make any alterations which the Secretary of State thinks necessary in the circumstances; and
- (b) if the local authority or returning officer fails to make those alterations within a month after the direction is given, himself make the alterations.

The Party should then organise a petition, getting as many signatures as possible from the electors in the area concerned. This could be worked in with other electoral preparations in the area. The wording of the petition could be on the following lines:

**TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE
FOR HOME AFFAIRS**

(To the Secretary of State—in the case of Scotland)

We, the undersigned, being electors for the said (electoral area) (ward) (polling district) herewith make representations under Section 11 (4) R.P.A. 1949 that the powers conferred under Section 11 of the Act have not been exercised so as to meet the reasonable requirements of the electors of the (—area—) and pray that sufficient alteration may be made to give electors convenient and reasonable polling facilities.

(Here mention some inconveniences and suggest a possible improvement.)

This procedure may appear to be a lengthy job, but it is not really so difficult. Most of the difficult areas are already known and local knowledge will play its part. The Labour Group should be consulted in order that they are able to discuss the matter on the appropriate council committee and to develop any points that may be raised.

The importance of action being taken NOW cannot be over-emphasised. Electoral Registration Officers are dealing with the 1959 Register and to leave it until after these Registers are published may well be too late.

LEN SIMS

3—Voters on the Move

IN the West Midlands we have been disappointed with the general lack of effective action to increase the number of our postal vote applications, despite the emphasis repeatedly made at constituency meetings. In recent weeks, steps have been taken to improve our machinery for this work.

Few constituencies have any record of 'Labour' postal vote applications submitted, and to assist them in this the Regional Office has printed special postal vote record cards.

As information is received on the possible eligibility of an elector for a postal vote, one of the record cards should be prepared and arrangements made for the elector to be contacted. The card has spaces for recording the action taken at the various stages.

As well as providing a ready record of postal vote applications, these cards could be used at an election to enable a call to be made on the supporters concerned immediately after the issue of postal ballot papers, to ensure they are properly completed and returned.

Each marginal constituency has been provided with 500 of these record cards free of charge—additional cards will be supplied as needed. Non-marginals may purchase supplies.

SPECIAL FORM

We were then concerned with the comparative absence of machinery for transferring information on removals, not only within a constituency, but particularly *between* constituencies. We decided to print a special elector's transfer form.

As it was necessary to give some notes on the use of the form, we thought it worth while to also mention the three main qualifications for a postal vote. These notes have the heading "A Vote in Hand . . . or lost

in the rush? Start NOW to win the next General Election".

Where an elector has moved within the same borough, urban district or rural parish, the form should be completed with the elector's name, previous and present addresses, canvass record, and the name of the party sending the form. It is then sent to the constituency secretary, thus enabling a record of removals to be kept so that appropriate action may be taken at the election.

REMEMBER R.P.F.8

Where supporters have moved within the same constituency from one local government area to another, or outside the rural parish, the transfer form (and, if possible, an R.P.F.8) should be completed, and both sent to the constituency secretary.

The primary purpose of the forms, however, is to *provide machinery* for following-up supporters who move from one constituency to another (but not within divided boroughs) and to take every possible step to ensure they apply for a postal vote.

For these removals between constituencies the transfer form is completed and sent to the Regional Office, which will act as a 'clearing house' and see that appropriate action is taken by the constituency party affected.

It has been stressed that inward removals traced by a non-marginal constituency may be of the utmost importance if such electors have moved from a marginal one.

Each marginal constituency was sent, free of charge, one thousand of these transfer forms. All other constituencies were sent a smaller supply to be used only for inter-constituency transfers, but these parties may pur-

chase additional supplies for internal use.

It is hoped that our parties will use both record cards and the transfer forms, and every opportunity is being taken to discuss this and general postal vote work with the various parties.

Stress is being continually made that the required information respecting postal votes can only be effectively obtained by a thorough canvass, or by active members being asked to supply information on supporters in their locality who might be qualified to apply for a postal vote.

Members whose work brings them into contact with electors, e.g., insurance agents, Co-op. collectors, etc., will be able to give especially valuable information.

The Assistant Regional Organiser has already spent time in some marginal constituencies making personal contact with ward secretaries and other key workers to discuss how this personal contact work might be carried out.

The Birmingham Borough Labour Party is to conduct a city-wide drive on postal voting, linked up with recording the very large number of supporters who move within the thirteen constituencies in the city and who thus do not qualify for a postal vote.

CALL TO ACTION

A special communication giving 'A Call to Action' is to be printed and distributed to the 18,000 Party members in Birmingham. This will particularly stress the postal vote facilities and the importance of tracing removals, and will contain a special message from the Leader of the Party.

Small advertisements are to be inserted at intervals in the personal columns of the local newspapers drawing attention to postal vote facilities.

A meeting of constituency party chairmen, secretaries, General Election agents, and ward secretaries is to be held at which plans for the 'Into Action' Campaign will be outlined. Special attention will be given to the work required on the postal vote, on which there is to be concentration between December and February.

The question of postal votes has also been considered by the Regional Council's Trade Union sub-committee, following which special approaches were made to the T.&G.W.U., N.U.R. and A.S.L.E.F. Details are still to be dis-

cussed with the latter unions. but an interview with the Regional Secretary of the T.&G.W.U. brought an immediate response.

He is sending, through the shop stewards, a special letter to the 5,000 members engaged in transport within Birmingham and district. This will outline the conditions under which a transport worker may apply for a postal vote, and is being accompanied by a copy of the postal vote form R.P.F.7. The member is asked to complete the form and return it to his shop steward, who will forward it to the union's regional office. The Party's Regional Office will despatch the completed forms to the appropriate Registration Officers.

If successful, it is possible that similar help will be given in the other districts within the region. This same union has already co-operated in the marginal Burton constituency where a letter, with an official R.P.F.7., has been sent to all members engaged in goods or brewery transport.

Officers of the N.U.R. and A.S.L.E.F. branches in this same constituency have also been contacted personally to secure the completion of forms by their members.

H. R. UNDERHILL

(Continued from page 228)

is to deal with this problem, they will find sources of information to tap among the Party members, Local Authorities' housing records, Co-operative Societies' lists of removals, Trade Union secretaries and shop stewards. A drive now to get postal votes for Labour supporters will make an important contribution to success at the General Election, and will more than balance the advantage the Tories will secure by the removal of the restriction on the number of cars they can employ on polling day.

A. L. WILLIAMS

The Faversham Constituency Labour Party's Annual Fête is so spectacular that reference has been made to it in our pages on several occasions. The professional attractions at the fête have been booked by Messrs. T. B. Phillips Ltd., whose advertisement appears on page 239.

1959 REGISTER: WATFORD ACTS

by David Maurice

DURING an election campaign, all of us have been confronted by an irate resident demanding why he has not had an election address. It hasn't helped any when we have been forced to reply that his name does not appear on the register of electors and thus he will not be able to vote.

There are many reasons why names do not appear on the register. Sometimes householders do not include the names of lodgers staying with them. Others forget to include the names of sons and daughters and other members of the family living with them. Others again just forget to complete and return the form to the Town Hall. Even canvassers employed by the Registration Officer on a door to door basis cannot always get all the required information.

Whatever the reasons, one thing we can be certain of is that each year a number of people who are otherwise legally qualified to vote cannot do so because their names do not appear on the register of electors.

In an effort to try and obtain a 100 per cent register, a publicity scheme has just been carried out in Watford from which we are hopeful of obtaining good results. Following a suggestion to the Town Clerk, he invited the political agents to meet him to discuss ways and means of bringing to the attention of the public, the preparing of next year's register.

Arising from this meeting, certain publicity methods were decided on, and the scheme was launched at a press conference held by the Town Clerk. Much free and useful publicity was had from this conference, the local Press being extremely helpful.

Crown size posters were printed for general display. These posters were done by silk screen process, with white lettering on a black background. This colour was decided on, being in itself

distinctive, and also not to be confused with the colours of the political organisations.

The wording was simple and to the point, and easily readable, the theme being **YOU CANNOT VOTE**—unless. Only 32 words were used on the poster, yet its message was very clear.

The posters were displayed in the libraries and in the Town Hall; on church notice boards, etc. The chamber of commerce co-operated, and shops had the poster on show. The political organisations issued them to their members for display in house windows.

Corporation vehicles, particularly those engaged in refuse collection, had the poster pasted to the sides of the vehicles. Factory and office management played their part by arranging for posters to be placed in prominent positions inside their buildings. They were also posted on hoarding sites throughout the borough. Altogether, approximately 700 posters were displayed in one way or another.

Slides were made of the poster, and this was shown in various cinemas for one week at the same time as ordinary advertisements. This advertising time was given free by the cinema managers.

What has been the result of this intensified campaign? At the moment it is too early to say, but this is known. The initial return of forms this year has been much greater than in previous years. In factories, employees have been heard to comment about the posters, so we know they have been made to realise the importance of the register of electors.

What of the cost? This will be around £20, not a lot to pay in ensuring a register as near correct as is possible.

There is to be a further display of posters in different colours when the Electors' Lists are published, urging people to examine the list to ensure that their names are included, and to make a claim if they are not.

Tide Turns for Coggeshall

THE most lasting impression of my first year in Coggeshall is the local election of May, 1949. Following the example of others, I placed my ear against the window of the polling station. Votes for the 'independents' were being called out with depressing regularity. Official Labour candidates were standing for the first time, and it was soon obvious that all of them had been soundly defeated.

My sorrow changed to fury, and I shouted 'We will change all that!' A woman nearby seemed hostile, but in fact was one of Labour's 'Mesdames Defarge', and she helped Coggeshall to change.

The Coggeshall Labour Party was much the same as other village parties in 1949 when village organisation was generally better than it is now. A few supporters met occasionally, or more frequently when there was an election. Subscriptions were not collected, but some were paid directly to the Secretary. Funds were good because one member had organised whist drives, and little money is spent by an inactive party.

We were optimistic in 1949; more fortunate than the committee of four who struggled on in the thirties, selling pencils at a profit of 2d. a dozen to raise funds, and dying out in 1938. We were optimistic, but not insane enough to foresee that the Coggeshall tote agent would collect £80 a week in 1958.

SOCIAL EVENINGS

Our first object was to get our supporters together. Committees were called regularly and a social evening was arranged. Because this was successful, many more followed and have helped to build up a fund of goodwill which is the basis of Labour's strength in Coggeshall.

Every opportunity was taken in committee to discuss political questions,

and numerous resolutions were sent to the National Executive Committee, the Constituency Party, to the M.P., and to the Press. At first, it was impossible to persuade any member to canvass. However, self-confidence and political courage grew with experience, and we now have several first-class canvassers. Coggeshall has been well canvassed many times.

Among the new members were a number of young men. Though irritated by their 'new broom' attitude, we swallowed our pride and helped to elect them into offices which carried responsibility as well as hard work. Failure to encourage newcomers in this way may be responsible for the lack of activity in some local parties.

YEARS OF TRIUMPH

Meanwhile, our women members founded a Co-operative guild which affiliated to the Coggeshall Labour Party and worked hard in socials and elections. The guild proved to be a rich field of recruitment of new members. Two trade union branch secretaries helped us to gain new men members.

By April, 1952, the Labour organisation was superior to the Tory, and taking advantage of the swing of opinion against the Tory Government, we gained the county seat from the Tories. Labour won all four rural district and five parish seats at the count in the West ward polling station, outside which I had fumed three years before. One of the two rural seats was won in East ward, and, by a fluke, one of the two seats in South ward.

The next three years were difficult with the steady decline in public support for Labour, but the organisation was maintained, and during the year preceding the 1955 elections, was improved. We retained the rural county division of Coggeshall while boroughs and urban districts showed Labour losses. The Labour majority (of one) was lost on the parish, but only one rural seat was lost (largely through shortage of candidates), apart from the fluke in South ward.

Fear of losing the General Election drove us into the greatest activity I had ever seen in any party. Gangs of canvassers worked in the area. Labour electors came out most willingly and in the Labour West ward, which includes half the electorate of Coggeshall, the percentage poll was 92 per cent. We were sure at 9 o'clock that Scutts had won; and if all local parties had worked as hard as Coggeshall, he would have.

EDUCATION AND PROPAGANDA

Our defeat led to a determination to build up greater strength based on political education and propaganda and to increase our social activities. The first discussion classes were fairly successful, but they did not improve, while socials failed to attract enough people.

However, when the tide began to turn in our favour again, our progress was remarkable. The local election results of 1958 were the best ever, and the county result with a Labour majority of nearly 500 and an increased Labour vote of 135

in a poll reduced to 50 per cent (compared with 1955), was the best in the Maldon constituency and possibly in the county. The electoral organisation had been excellent and in the spirit magnificent.

Coggeshall has a paid-up membership of 270, a tote membership of 1,600, and socials have been attracting between 250 and 300 every month.

But statistics do not describe a political movement; they do not tell of loyalty that makes a disappointment in a party a personal loss; or a success a personal triumph; or of Chris. Walker's emotion when 'all those young men yelled' with delight at the announcement of his victory; or of my pride in the Coggeshall Labour family when one of our best younger members said, 'Ron, your babies have grown up'.

It must have been this spirit which gave the Labour Movement its power; and lack of it which limits its progress.

RON ATKINS

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LABOUR FACES THE 1914 WAR

ON July 29th, 1914, an impressive demonstration took place in Brussels under the auspices of the International Socialist Bureau. A united appeal for peace was made by Juarez of France, Vandervelde of Belgium, Haase of Germany, Rubanovitch of Russia, Morgari of Italy, and Keir Hardie of Britain.

Three days later, on Sunday, August 2nd, the British section of the International Bureau held a remarkable demonstration in support of peace in Trafalgar Square.

That very night, Germany, having made common cause with Austria, declared war on France and Russia. The very next day she declared war on Belgium. On this breach of neutrality, Britain declared war on Germany the following day.

On August 5th, the National Executive Committee of the Labour Party carried a resolution declaring that conflict in Europe had arisen owing to the pursuit of diplomatic policies for the purpose of maintaining a balance of power.

It went on to say that Sir Edward Grey, when speaking in the House of Commons, on August 3rd, had proved that he had committed the honour of our country to support France in the event of war, without the knowledge of our people, and had given assurances of support before the House of Commons had had any chance of considering the matter.

Meeting Called

Finally, the resolution reiterated its opposition to the policies which had led to war and went on to declare that it was its duty to secure peace at the earliest possible moment on conditions which would re-establish amicable feelings between the workers of Europe.

On the same day a meeting of representatives of all sections of the Labour and Socialist movement was held in the House of Commons, when the organi-

sation which became known as the War Emergency Workers' National Committee was formed. At this meeting a series of recommendations concerning the industrial and social consequences of the war were overwhelmingly adopted.

Its Chairman was Robert Smillie, Vice-Chairman James O'Grady, M.P., and among the well-known personalities on the committee were Harry Gosling, Fred Bramley, Ramsay MacDonald, Ben Turner, W. C. Anderson, Ben Tillet, Herbert Smith, F. W. Jowett, Mary MacArthur, Margaret Bondfield, Dr. Marion Phillips, Susan Lawrence, Sidney Webb, E. R. Pease and H. M. Hyndeman.

Joined Cabinet

The National Executive Committee met again on the 29th August when it made momentous decisions. It decided to engage in the Electoral Truce and the Recruiting Campaign.

In May, 1915, a joint meeting of the National Executive Committee and the Parliamentary Labour Party decided to accept the invitation of the Prime Minister to join a Coalition Government. Arthur Henderson was appointed President of the Board of Education, with a seat in the Cabinet; William Brace, M.P., became Under-Secretary for Home Affairs, and G. H. Roberts, M.P., Junior Lord of the Treasury.

By decision of a ballot vote of all affiliated organisations, no conference was held in January, 1915, owing to dislocations caused by the war, but the 1916 conference was held at Bristol, and was presided over by W. C. Anderson, M.P., of the Independent Labour Party.

At this conference the decisions taken by the National Executive Committee in regard to the war did not receive the approval without opposition and great heart searchings.

The Independent Labour Party led the opposition. On its behalf, Ramsay

MacDonald opposed a resolution moved by James Sexton, on behalf of the Dock Labourers, supporting the war. MacDonald made a passionate plea for an understanding of the minority point of view against the war, which was held by many delegates.

Philip Snowden and Dick Wallhead opposed a motion supporting the Electoral Truce and the Recruiting Campaign moved by A. G. Walkden, on behalf of the Railway Clerks' Association. Nevertheless, conference supported the Dock Labourers and the Railway Clerks' Association by overwhelming majorities.

Keir Hardie died in 1915. It seems sad that the filling of the vacancy at Merthyr should have been marred by difficulties which arose following the selection of the candidate. Mr. J. Winstone, the Miners' nominee, was selected and endorsed by the National Executive Committee, but Union's ballot, opposed him and won the seat.

Despite the dislocation of Party organisation caused by the war, membership had increased. A large number of affiliated organisations had initiated political funds under the Trade Union Act of 1913.

By the end of 1915 affiliated membership had grown to 2,930,365. There were

now 102 Trades Councils and 75 local Labour parties affiliated. The combined membership of the Independent Labour Party, the Fabian Society and the Women's Labour League had grown to over 32,000.

More Money

The financial position was improving, too. A balance in the funds of £1,528 at December, 1915, was a record. The grants paid to 22 Constituency Labour Parties during that year for supporting full-time agents amounted to £531 11s. 6d., and a total sum of £70 had been paid to seven constituencies for carrying out special registration work.

The response to the National Executive Committee's offer to give financial assistance to those constituencies employing full-time agents can hardly have been called satisfactory. The war had, however, militated against the agency scheme.

In 1915 a new department was instituted at Head Office, known as the Information Bureau. Mr. W. Gillies, of Glasgow, was appointed as its librarian and secretary. The work of the bureau was described as the collection of materials relating to current, social and

(Continued on next page)

NEW AGENTS

THE following Agency appointments have been approved by the National Executive Committee:

MRS. BAILEY to Central Nottingham. Mrs. Bailey has been a member of the Party for more than 30 years. She has held various offices, including that of constituency party secretary. For the past five years she has acted as an agent at local government elections.

MR. D. M. BRIDGEMAN to Sudbury and Woodbridge. David Bridgeman, a road transport employee at Plymouth, has been appointed as assistant organiser to the Sudbury and Woodbridge Constituency Labour Party. Aged 33 and a member of the Party for six years, he has held various offices and has been a local government candidate on a number of occasions.

MR. E. DIGNAN to Halifax. Eric Dignan is 33 years of age and has been a member of the Party for 10 years. A

master plumber, he has been a councillor at Halifax for the past five years.

MR. J. H. F. FRYD to Hemel Hempstead. John Fryd is 46 years of age. A journalist by profession, he has been an active member of the Party for 30 years and held a wide variety of offices. He acted as election agent in the Hemel Hempstead Constituency at the 1955 General Election.

MR. G. S. PICKFORD to Colne Valley. On completing the Agents' Training Course, George Pickford was appointed at Stockton, where he has been a full-time agent for the past 18 months. He is 32 years of age and has been a member of the Party for 10 years.

MR. D. C. THORNDALL to Gloucester. David Thorndell fills the newly-created post of assistant agent at Gloucester. Aged 32, a tool storekeeper, he has been a member of the Party for 10½ years and was a candidate at this year's county and borough elections.

political history, and its preservation. The addition of this department necessitated more accommodation and the party moved from 28, to 1 Victoria Street.

The Scottish Council was now established at Glasgow, and Mr. Ben Shaw, of Glasgow, was appointed Scottish Secretary. Its Executive Committee included Robert Smillie, James Walker, William Stewart and James Maxton.

For many years the Labour Party had been dissatisfied about the appointment of magistrates. The recommendations of the Royal Commission on the subject in 1910 had resulted in the modification of some political anomalies. However, there was still a marked absence of working-class representatives.

The National Executive Committee circulated every affiliated organisation in England and Wales, and gave a report of its findings to the 1916 conference. Not all affiliated organisations assisted by returning the form, but out of 117 replies the following information was obtained. In the towns and cities covered by the returned questionnaires, there were 4,458 magistrates, of these 1,647 were Tories, 1,518 were Liberals, 205 were Labour and 176 were Independent.

Overwhelming Case

Conference agreed that the attention of the Lord Chancellor be drawn to Labour's overwhelming case for the appointment of more magistrates.

The report included another very lamentable story. The *Daily Citizen* was no more. The Labour movement had proved it was incapable, or unwilling, to preserve its own daily newspaper which had served it admirably for two and a half years.

Two conferences had been held with trade union representatives to consider the principle of a voluntary levy on trade union members for the purpose of guaranteeing the publication of the *Citizen*, both conferences failed. The board had agreed that either the London, or the Manchester edition, would have to be dropped in the interests of economy. As the bulk of the trade union membership upon which the paper relied could be reached more easily from Manchester, it was decided that the London edition should be dropped. However, the economies were insufficient and the last issue of the paper appeared on the 5th June, 1915.

S. E. BARKER

THIS PARTY IS PREPARED FOR ACTION

THE National Agent and the Assistant National Agent have been consulting key workers in marginal constituencies about the work that they have been doing to build up their election records, and their preparations to fight a General Election.

If a prize were to be given for the best job undertaken so far, it would go to a constituency which was not won last time by less than 4,000 votes, and which now has on index cards 'promises' which are 6,000 more than the vote given to the Labour candidate at the last General Election.

The voluntary agent of this constituency reports the following preparatory work completed, or in hand:

1. Election circulars drafted.
2. Promise slips purchased.
3. Central committee room progress chart prepared.
4. List of cars prepared.
5. List of key workers prepared.
6. List of committee rooms prepared.
7. Polling district maps for committee rooms prepared.
8. Installation of telephones, etc., now being considered.
9. Agent is now working on draft candidate's and agent's diaries—works meetings, hospital and hostel visits, candidate's 'progresses' with loudspeaker, etc.
10. Central register of removals is being kept up-to-date month by month by agent.
11. Lists of number of electors, number of houses, number of Labour voters, street by street, for whole constituency have been prepared from the records—thus showing our strength or weakness street by street.
12. Break-down of all 32 polling districts into convenient areas for knock-up completed before May elections, 1958. Promise slips on boards are coloured accordingly.
13. Three new polling stations secured last year.
14. Candidate and agent are now visiting potential ward workers.

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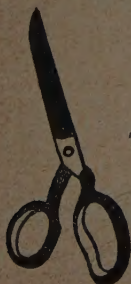
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